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BULLETIN OF THE
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
VOLUME XVII, NUMBER 4

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THE ABBOTT H. THAYER
MEMORIAL EXHIBITION

THE private view of the Abbott H. Thayer Memorial Exhibition took place on March 20. The collection was opened to the public on the next day and will remain at the Museum until April 30. Altogether seventy-six works are shown, illustrating Thayer's output from his boyhood up to the eve of his death. All these pictures display the same gentle and tender idealism. The artist's temperament as revealed by them is indeed a lovable one. His distaste for the hurry and turmoil of cities urged him to the country and he founded his home near his beloved Monadnock. Here in the midst of the nature he loved as an artist and studied as a scientist, his career unrolled itself. Absorbed in his work and in observation, free from haunting inquietudes and passionate strivings, he pursued his continual ideal—a veritable Dream of Fair Women. The ladies of his imagination are not like women

of the earth; the problems and cares of life have never touched them; like idols they are only to be revered. This exquisite conception of womanhood was one that belonged to the last century; it is of the time which under the epithet of Victorian the modern extremists are ineptly in the habit of deriding. B. B.

AN EARLY GOTHIC STATUE OF
A SEATED KING

THE ancestry of Christ is often represented in mediaeval painting and sculpture. The stained-glass window representing the Tree of Jesse, described elsewhere in this BULLETIN, is an example of one popular form in which the royal lineage was set forth, and the portal sculptures of the early Gothic cathedrals afford numerous instances of the prominence given to this theme in the iconography of the Middle Ages. The column-statue of a King of Judah, purchased by the Museum two years ago, is a remarkable instance of sculpture of this type, dating from the second half of the twelfth century.

A recent purchase has just added to the Museum collection still another representation of a royal ancestor, a stone statue¹ of exceptional beauty and archaeological interest, which is now exhibited with several other new acquisitions of Romanesque and Gothic sculpture in the rearranged gallery of mediaeval art on the second floor of Wing J.

The statue represents a bearded man seated on a massive throne of Romanesque design. The left hand originally held a scepter. This has now been destroyed, but traces remain on the stone to show that it was held against the left shoulder. The right hand is missing. The back of the throne has been somewhat injured and the head of the figure at some time has been broken off and replaced, but otherwise the statue is in good condition. No traces remain of the painted decoration which undoubtedly completed the sculpture in its original condition. The king wears a sleeved tunic confined at the waist by a long belt. The folds of this garment are

¹Acc. No. 22.31.2. Height, 40½ inches.

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A SEATED KING
FRENCH, FIRST HALF OF XIII CENTURY

so arranged as to show the right leg from the foot to the knee. A mantle covers the left shoulder and arm, and is fastened with a brooch on the right shoulder. The king wears what appears to be a round, flat-topped hat, but, allowing for the destruc-

Compared with the column-statue of a King of Judah, in which we see the first stirrings of the new spirit of naturalism that gave rise to the Gothic style, the statue of the seated king marks a tremendous advance in realistic representation. The



A SEATED KING
FRENCH, FIRST HALF OF XIII CENTURY

tion of projecting parts, this may originally have had the form of a crown. The statue presumably formed part of an architectural ensemble; it may have stood in a niche or, with other similar statues of kings and prophets, formed the decoration of a lintel. The slot cut in the base between the feet is probably not part of the original design.

proportions of the figure are normal; the attitude and modeling show observation of nature. Reminiscences of the earlier style still persist in the conventional delineation of the locks of hair, but the masses are composed with more freedom than in the Romanesque period. Although the drapery still exhibits a certain restraint and

simplicity of treatment recalling the earlier formalism, it falls in natural folds which suggest the body beneath. Indeed, one might almost think that the sculptor had devised the unusual arrangement of the tunic drawn up above the right knee for no better reason than to display his newly won ability to model a shapely calf.

When monumental sculpture, after centuries of neglect, reappeared in the Romanesque period, it took the form mainly of relief-carving applied to architecture. Sculpture in the round presented an even greater problem to the inexperienced craftsman. The solution, however, was not long delayed. In the course of the thirteenth century the Gothic sculptor acquired a technical competence fully sufficient for the expression of all that was truly significant in form, but not that dangerous facility which tempted to the imitation of unessential detail. Hence, in sculpture of the thirteenth century, the simplicity and directness of expression so admirably consonant with the nobility of sentiment then prevailing in religious art.

These qualities are conspicuous in our statue of the seated king, and, although the form of the throne recalls Romanesque art, the statue may undoubtedly be assigned to the first half of the thirteenth century. Nothing is known of its provenance except that some twenty-five or thirty years ago it was in Avignon, a city in southeastern France where the Popes resided in the fourteenth century during the "Babylonian Captivity" of the Church. But long before this, Avignon was an important city, enjoying the dignity of a republic at the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth; the city was taken and dismantled by Louis VIII of France, and forced in 1251 to submit to the counts of Toulouse and Provence. Our statue may well be a work of the Provençal school and have come from one of the now destroyed churches of the thirteenth century at Avignon. But these questions of provenance and stylistic associations must await a more extended study than has been possible in the preparation of this preliminary report.

J. B.

THE JESSE WINDOW

THE Museum collection of stained glass has gained much distinction through the recent acquisition of a window representing the Tree of Jesse. The glass is composed of six large medallions with pairs of smaller medallions between, and measures 12 feet, 10 inches in height, 13 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches in width. This panel probably formed one light of a double or triple lancet-window. The glass has very little restoration and is in unusually good condition for work of such an early period. It was the rarest item in the Costessey Collection, formerly at Costessey Hall at Norfolk, England, a collection made in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The provenance of the Costessey glass is unknown, but the Jesse window may be ascribed with certainty to the early Gothic period of the Lower Rhenish school (about 1300). It is exhibited in a small chapel-like structure in the mediaeval room, second floor, Wing J, where it is shown by artificial light owing to the present lack of space for exhibiting glass by daylight.

The Costessey Collection¹ was formed by Sir William Jerningham, sixth Baronet of Costessey in Norfolk (b. 1736—d. 1809) and by his sons, George William and William Charles. As the latter served in the Austrian army, the acquisition of much of the glass is possibly due to this son's wanderings on the Continent at a time when there was little appreciation for such things. The collection exemplifies, however, that growing enthusiasm in the eighteenth century for "Gothic" or "barbarous" art, entirely alien to the classicism of the time. The movement centered in Strawberry Hill, the seat of Sir Horace Walpole, who encouraged a romantic taste in England for mediaeval art. It was in the spirit of this antiquarianism that Sir William Jerningham erected a chapel for the exhibition of his glass at Costessey Hall. The collection did not go out of the family until 1918, when the glass was sold and has since been partly dispersed.

¹A. Vallance. *Costessey Collection of Glass*, *Burlington Magazine*, vol. XXXV, 1919, pp. 26-31.